

The LAY-MONK.

*Nil durins,
Quam quod homines ridiculos facit.* Juv.

From MONDAY, February 8. to WEDNESDAY, February 10. 1713.

MAN is by Nature so great a Lover of Esteem and Popularity, that perhaps no other Inclination sways the Soul with a stronger Bias. As in general it governs his Designs, and animates the Execution of them, so in particular it is often the Spring of that Praise which he bestows on others, while he makes his court to every Man, and says something handsome and obliging to all who come into his Company, that they in their turn may speak well of him, and propagate his Reputation. This inbred Passion makes Men incapable of bearing Neglect and Contempt; and nothing more crosses their Desires and gives them more Uneasiness, than to become the Objects of Jest and Derision. This, I perswade my self, has often more weaken'd, and at last extinguish'd the unconfirm'd Vertue of young Persons, and made more Converts to Irreligion and Immorality, than any other Discouragement. When ingenious and libertine Laughters set upon modest Innocence, and expose a reserv'd Behaviour limited by the Rules of Vertue and Religion, the bashful Possessor is put out of Countenance; and not being able to stand the Shock of their repeated Raillery, to avoid Scandal, he yields to Temptations, and rather chuses to be vicious and fashionable, than innocent and ridiculous.

To obviate this Objection to the Practice of Vertue, that it draws upon a Man Disrespect and

Scorn, it should be consider'd, that the Commendations and Esteem of ill Men are neither to be hop'd for nor desir'd.

When contending Parties divide a Nation, and oppose each other with the utmost Violence, it is not reasonable to expect they should magnify the Merit of one another, and be zealous to protect each other's Reputation. Now those Persons who have espous'd the Interests of Vice and Immorality are an implacable Party, who declare against the Good and Innocent: A Party that appear'd in the eldest Ages of the World, and so general, that they do not only embroil a single Nation, but all Mankind, while with the utmost Zeal they labour to suppress Vertue, and exterminate Religion from their Species.

Now, as it is not imaginable that this immoral Faction, that undermine Vertue, and strike at the Foundations of Religion, should ever speak honourably of the Patrons of one and the Practicers of the other; so is it true that Men of Vertue have no Reason to desire their Praises; for as this would derive a Censure upon them, that they had deserv'd the Applause of ill Men by some immoral Actions, and culpable Compliances, (for if an Atheist cries a Man up, we are diffident of his Religion, and if a Libertine commends him, we suspect his Vertue) so it should be consider'd, that

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that to depend on the good Opinion of bad Men, is to put our Ease and Happiness out of our own Possession, and to make it over to those Persons in Trust for us, who bear us Ill-Will upon the Account of our most valuable Qualities. Besides, would Men attend to the Dictates of Reason, and view this Matter in a true Light, they would soon discern that the Derision and Reproaches of the Loose and Immoral are in reality great Encomiums, and a conspicuous Mark of true Honour. The Approbation and Praise we receive from the Vertuous, the Generous and the Wise, impart to our Minds secret Joy and Satisfaction, as they give us Assurance of our Integrity and Merit; and for the same Reason the Calumnies and ill Representations of us by immoral Men should be look'd on as a Testimony they bear to our Vertue, and an Honour they do us, to acknowledge we are unlike to themselves. When the Philosopher was told, That some bad Men had revild him, he reply'd, I am oblig'd to those Persons for celebrating my Praises, and shall endeavour to behave my self so well, as never to forfeit their ill Opinion.

To be vilify'd and derided by the Haters of Vertue, and Patrons of Irreligion, is therefore an Honour on which a Man may justly value himself. It is enough to move Vanity in our own Minds, and Envy in others; and not to be elated under such a Temptation, if the right Notion of Honour were understood, would be a Mark of eminent Modesty. What are the Shouts and Acclamations which rung in the Ears of *Cæsar*, when he enter'd Rome in Triumph, if compar'd with the Applauses that *Socrates* receiv'd, when he came into the Theatre, and receiv'd, upon the Account of his singular Vertue, the loud Derision of the degenerate *Athenians*? With what Constancy and Satisfaction did he hear the highest Expressions of Contempt and Indignation bearing Witness to his Piety and uncommon Merit? It is not unreasonable to think he might entertain himself with some secret Reflections like these: "Can I flatter my self that I have Merit enough to extort from those flagitious People such a general Confession of their Hatred and Contempt? Were I really possess'd of so much Vertue as might justly attract the Scorn and Malevolence of these Enemies of Goodness, it might fill my Soul with Vain-glory. Such a Soliloquy might employ his Thoughts when he receiv'd this publick and universal Approbation of his Piety from sincere and unbiass'd Judges. Never is any Applause more free from Flattery, than when a flagitious Assembly proclaim their Scorn and Detestation of a vertuous Man.

Thus a Person of superior Goodness may enjoy Malevolence and Defamation, turn Invectives into Panegyrics, and take Pleasure in the Reproaches of the Vicious, which are the Reward of Vertue, as well as the Praises of good Men, both equally expressing the Opinion of our Merit, which is the true Notion of Fame and Glory. The Integrity of ill Men may be depended on, when by their evil speaking they publicly confess the Merit of others; and in this Respect their Calumnies surpass the Encomiums of the Good, who from a charitable Disposition may flatter us with too great Expressions of their Esteem, and exalt us with Praises to which our Vertue is unequal.

This Discourse was occasion'd by the following Letter.

To Mr. RAVENSCROFT.

S I R,

I Am a young Gentleman of the Temple, where I have resided two Years. Besides the Advantages of a liberal Education, I receiv'd early Impressions of Vertue from the pious Instructions and Example of an indulgent Mother. I have hitherto preserv'd that Regularity of Manners in which I have been brought up; notwithstanding some of my loose Relations, and other young Men of Wit and Pleasure, have often attempted to seduce me. They make me the common Mark of their Flouts and Raillery, and always expose me when I am oblig'd to be in their Company, to make me ashamed of my unfashionable Reservedness. One with a scoffing Air says, I hope, Will. you follow the wholesome Advice and good Counsel that your Mother and the Doctor of the Parish send you. Another cries, with a sarcastical Sneer, I would by no Means have you forget to read your Chapter and say your Prayers every Day. A third commends me as a great Goer to Church, and hopes I am mightily edify'd by hearing Sermons. This constant Derision has been a shocking Discouragement, and has often made me very uneasy; and therefore, Sir, I entreat you to publish a Discourse on this Subject, that may be useful to my self, and to others in the same Circumstances. I am,

S I R,

Middle-Temple,
Feb. 1. 1714.

Your Humble Servant,

C. R.



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